

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3054

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 1535

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF DC CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES' LEADER PICCOLI ON REFERENDUM

1. IN JANUARY 30 MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR THE LEADER OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT GROUP IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, FLAMINIO PICCOLI, EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT THE ANTI-DIVORCE FORCES WOULD WIN THE DIVORCE REFERENDUM TEST. HE VOICED THE HOPE THAT THE CHURCH WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT GET TOO INVOLVED, HOWEVER, AND THEREBY RISK PROVOKING A NEGATIVE VOTER REACTION. PICCOLI SAID THAT WHILE NO DATE HAS YET BEEN SET FOR THE REFERENDUM, HIS GUESS WOULD BE THAT IT WOULD BE HELD ON ONE OF THE LAST TWO SUNDAYS IN MAY.

2. PICCOLI SAID A DC DEFEAT AT THE POLLS ON THIS ISSUE WOULD HURT THE DC BADLY AND WOULD SERIOUSLY EFFECT THE CENTER-LEFT COALITION. HOWEVER, PICCOLI SAID THAT IF THE SOCIALISTS AND COMMUNISTS TURN THE REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN INTO A FRONTAL ATTACK ON THE DC AND IF, UNDER THOSE CONDITIONS, THE DC WINS A MAJOR VICTORY, HIS PARTY WILL BE GREATLY STRENGTHENED. HE AGREED THAT THIS MIGHT LEAD TO A CALL FOR NEW ELECTIONS.

3. COMMENT: PICCOLI'S VIEWS ON THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE REFERENDUM CONTEST JIBE WITH THOSE WE HAVE BEEN HEARING FROM MOST OTHER DC LEADERS WHETHER THE DC AND THE OTHER ANTI-
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DIVORCE FORCES WIN OR LOSE, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE RUMOR GOVERNMENT,

ALREADY BURDENED WITH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES, WILL
BE PUT UNDER INTENSE STRAIN DURING THE CAMPAIGN AND FOLLOWING THE
REFERENDUM VOTE. SIGNS OF THE INCREASED TENSION WITHIN THE
GOVERNMENT ARE PRESS REPORTS THAT A COALITION PARTY
SUMMIT MEETING IS TO BE HELD FEBRUARY 4 AND THE NOTES OF DISCORD
AILED IN THE PSI DIRECTORATE MEETING OF JANUARY EQ (SEPTTEL).
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